

Denise Levertov

Quotes

*Writing, Night, White, World, Prayer, Light, Heart, Women, Imagination, Eye,
Girl, Poetry, War, Splits, Art, Dream, Space, Self, Water, Joy*

You have come to the shore. There are no instructions.

~Denise Levertov

Both art and faith are dependent on imagination; both are ventures into the unknown.

~Denise Levertov

I'm not very good at praying, but what I experience when I'm writing a poem is close to prayer.

~Denise Levertov

Nothing we do has the quickness, the sureness, the deep intelligence living at peace would have.

~Denise Levertov

It's when we face for a moment the worst our kind can do, and shudder to know the taint in our own selves, that awe cracks the mind's shell and enters the heart.

~Denise Levertov

Grief is a hole you walk around in the daytime and at night you fall into it.

~Denise Levertov

In certain ways writing is a form of prayer.

~Denise Levertov

Marvelous Truth, confront us at every turn, in every guise.

~Denise Levertov

One of the obligations of the writer is to say or sing all that he or she can, to deal with as much of the world as becomes possible to him or her in language.

~Denise Levertov

What I heard was my whole self saying and singing what it knew: I can.

~Denise Levertov

But for us the road unfurls itself, we don't stop walking, we know there is far to go.

~Denise Levertov

Insofar as poetry has a social function it is to awaken sleepers by other means than shock.

~Denise Levertov

But we have only begun to love the earth. We have only begun to imagine the fullness of life. How could we tire of hope?-so much is in bud.

~Denise Levertov

There is no savor more sweet, more salt than to be glad to be what, woman, and who, myself, I am.

~Denise Levertov

The poem has a social effect of some kind whether or not the poet wills it to have. It has a kinetic force, it sets in motion...elements in the reader that would otherwise remain stagnant.

~Denise Levertov

my pleasure was in the strength of my back, in my noble shoulders, the cool smooth flesh cylinders of my arms.

~Denise Levertov

Mediocrity is perhaps due not so much to lack of imagination as to lack of faith in the imagination, lack of the capacity for this abandon.

~Denise Levertov

At Delphi I prayed to Apollo that he maintain in me the flame of the

poem and I drank of the brackish spring there.

~Denise Levertov

I learn to affirm Truth's light at strange turns of the mind's road, wrong turns that lead over the border into wonder.

~Denise Levertov

If woman is inconstant, good, I am faithful to ebb and flow, I fall in season and now is a time of ripening.

~Denise Levertov

The last cobwebs of fog in the black firtrees are flakes of white ash in the world's hearth.

~Denise Levertov

Love is a landscape the long mountains define but don't shut off from the unseeable distance.

~Denise Levertov

Peace as a positive condition of society, not merely as an interim between wars, is something so unknown that it casts no images on the mind's screen.

~Denise Levertov

Very few people really see things unless they've had someone in early life who made them look at things. And name them too. But the looking is primary, the focus.

~Denise Levertov

There's in my mind a... turbulent moon-ridden girl or old woman, or both, dressed in opals and rags, feathers and torn taffeta, who knows strange songs but she is not kind.

~Denise Levertov

There comes a time when only anger is love.

~Denise Levertov

What joy when the insouciant armadillo glances at us and doesn't quicken his trotting across the track into the palm brush. What is this joy? That no animal falters, but knows what it must do?

~Denise Levertov

Images split the truth in fractions.

~Denise Levertov

The artist must create himself or be born again.

~Denise Levertov

Breathe the sweetness that hovers in August.

~Denise Levertov

Every day, every day I hear enough to fill a year of nights with wondering.

~Denise Levertov

The stairway is not a thing of gleaming strands a radiant evanescence for angels' feet that only glance in their tread, and need not touch the stone.

~Denise Levertov

Writing poetry is a process of discovery...you can smell the poem before you see it....Like some animal.

~Denise Levertov

We must breathe time as fishes breathe water.

~Denise Levertov

So absolute, it is no other than happiness itself, a breathing too quiet to

hear.

~Denise Levertov

Let the space under the first storey be dark, let the water lap the stone posts, and vivid green slime glimmer upon them; let a boat be kept there.

~Denise Levertov

Do you mistake me? I am speaking of living, of moving from one moment into the next, and into the one after, breathing death in the spring air.

~Denise Levertov

Mountain, mountain, mountain, marking time. Each nameless, wall beyond wall, wavering redefinition of horizon.

~Denise Levertov

A blind man. I can stare at him ashamed, shameless. Or does he know it? No, he is in a great solitude. O, strange joy, to gaze my fill at a stranger's face. No, my thirst is greater than before.

~Denise Levertov

And our dreams, with what frivolity we have pared them like toenails, clipped them like ends of split hair.

~Denise Levertov

blue bead on the wick, there's that in me that burns and chills, blackening my heart with its soot, I think sometimes not Apollo heard me but a different god.

~Denise Levertov

I watch the clouds as I see them in pomp advancing, pursuing the fallen sun.

~Denise Levertov

Praise the invisible sun burning beyond the white cold sky, giving us light and the chimney's shadow.

~Denise Levertov

Teachers at all levels encourage the idea that you have to talk about things in order to understand them, because they wouldn't have jobs, otherwise. But it's phony, you know.

~Denise Levertov

Wear scarlet! Tear the green lemons off the tree! I don't want to forget who I am, what has burned in me, and hang limp and clean, an empty dress -

~Denise Levertov

We have the words in our pockets, obscure directions. The old ones have taken away the light of their presence.

~Denise Levertov

The fire in leaf and grass so green it seems each summer the last summer.

~Denise Levertov

The vast silence of Buddha overtakes and overrules the oncoming roar of tragic life that fills alleys and avenues; it blocks the way of pedicabs, police, convoys.

~Denise Levertov

Among a hundred windows shining dully in the vast side of greater-than-palace number such-and-such one burns these several years, each night as if the room within were aflame.

~Denise Levertov

I'll dig in into my days, having come here to live, not to visit. Grey is the price of neighboring with eagles, of knowing a mountain's vast

presence, seen or unseen.

~Denise Levertov

Two girls discover the secret of life in a sudden line of poetry.

~Denise Levertov

In June the bush we call alder was heavy, listless, its leaves studded with galls, growing wherever we didn't want it.

~Denise Levertov

Hypocrite women, how seldom we speak of our own doubts, while dubiously we mother man in his doubt!

~Denise Levertov

Don't eat those nice green dollars your wife gives you for breakfast.

~Denise Levertov

The threat of world's end is the old threat.

~Denise Levertov

In city, in suburb, in forest, no way to stretch out the arms - so if you would grow, go straight up or deep down.

~Denise Levertov

Let me walk through the fields of paper touching with my wand dry stems and stunted butterflies.

~Denise Levertov

Affliction is more apt to suffocate the imagination than to stimulate it.

~Denise Levertov

Through the hollow globe, a ring of frayed rusty scrapiron, is it the sea that shines? Is it a road at the world's edge?

~Denise Levertov

slowly the pale dew-beads of light lapped up from flowers can thicken, darken to gold: honey of the human.

~Denise Levertov

The world is not with us enough. O taste and see.

~Denise Levertov

It is fatal to one's artistic life to talk about something that is in process.

~Denise Levertov

We are so many and many within themselves travel to far islands but no one asks for their story.

~Denise Levertov

Each part of speech a spark awaiting redemption, each a virtue, a power in abeyance.

~Denise Levertov

Beespittle, droppings, hairs of beefur: all become honey. Virulent micro-organisms cannot survive in honey.

~Denise Levertov

We call it "Nature"; only reluctantly admitting ourselves to be "Nature" too.

~Denise Levertov

I like to find what's not found at once, but lies within something of another nature, in repose, distinct.

~Denise Levertov

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